THE CHURCH MONTHLY

Volume 6 FEBRUARY, 1932 *Number 4*

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Photograph by Frank Ehrenford

CENTRAL PANEL OF PULPIT RAIL

The prophets are Jonah, Ezekiel and Micah. The two canopies represent, respectively, in small scale motifs, the cathedrals of Notre Dame and of Rheims.

THE CHURCH MONTHLY

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The Way Out from a Dry-as-Dust Religion

By HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK

THIS morning we are seeking the way out from a dry-as-dust religion. We shall not bother to attack religious formalism—that is too easy. Rather, we frankly shall acknowledge that too often our own Christianity is a dry-as-dust affair, an inheritance of belief handed down to us or a set of opinions which somewhat superficially we have argued ourselves into, or an occasional observance of worship which we were brought up on, but nothing that thrills us very much or vitally affects our characters and our careers. And we shall take ourselves at our best this morning and wish that this were not so and that, if the religious life can bring a man the impetus and inspiration which its great expositors say it can, we might learn the secret.

Nowhere in the New Testament, I think, is that secret more clearly stated than in the words which John's Gospel puts upon the lips of the blind man whom Jesus healed: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." You need not bother with the historicity of the miracle involved there if you do not wish to. The literalness of the miracle is not necessary to anything that we shall say. Indeed, the literalness of the miracle was the last thing, I suspect, which John himself was interested in when he put this narrative in his Gospel. John was an Oriental preacher and throughout his Gospel he is presenting Jesus in ways as vivid as he can: as a life-giver, for example—that is what the story of the raising of Lazarus is all about; and as a light-bringer who can make men see—that is what the story of healing the blind man is all about. Whatever, therefore, may have been in John's mind regarding the literalness of the story, I am sure it was the spiritual meaning which he was mainly driving at. He tells us a fascinating parable-narrative about a blind man who at last can see and who on that point stands his ground against all comers. When the man's parents will not back him up for fear of the consequences, when the religious leaders of his people argue with him, cajole him, threaten him, he digs his heels in and will not budge on the main issue. Jesus may be this or that, he says, and your opinions may be thus or so, but one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

In any realm such an experience is not conventional or formal; it is convincing and real, and at the heart of it are the two words that have done up in them, I suspect, as much of human destiny as any two in the vocabulary: I see.

Consider, to start with, that there is no deeper way of describing a profound transformation of character than to say, I was blind about life, but now I see. Wherever that happens a real change has taken place. For what we see or do not see in life is the test of us. Every man reveals himself through his eyes.

Once on an autumn day when the Swiss forests were glorious with lavish intermar-

riages of color, I stood upon an Alpine height with one of the grandest views on earth outspread before me, when two women came toiling up, stared listlessly around and said, "We have read that there is a view up here. Where is it?" There was no use telling them that it was there before them. They were thinking only at second hand of something that Baedeker had starred. They were conventional believers in something that somebody else had reported that he had seen, but their eyes were holden. How deeply revealing of one's inner nature the test of vision is!

There is more serious philosophy in some of those Mother Goose rhymes than they are given credit for. Recall that very homely one about the cat who went all the way up to London to see the queen.

"Pussy cat, pussy cat, what did you there?
I frightened a little mouse under the chair."

Precisely! That is what a cat would do who went all the way up to London to the palace—see not the queen but a mouse. How frequently we operate in similar fashion and reveal our nature by what we see in life! There never can come a more significant hour to any man or woman than when he or she can say, I was blind but now I see.

Consider this further fact, then, that the source of our conventional dry-as-dust religion lies in our capacity theoretically to believe so many things that we do not genuinely see. We believe in many Christian opinions, for example. We inherited them, we picked them up, they are starred in the Baedeker of our Western tradition, or we superficially argued ourselves into the acceptance of them. We believe in many Christian opinions but we do not see life as Jesus saw it.

How deep that difference is! We believe in the queen but we see the mouse. And what a man vividly sees in life is infinitely more influential than what he theoretically believes.

The common saying runs that seeing is believing. To be sure it is, but the reverse is not true. Believing is not seeing. There may be a million spiritual miles between. Some of us for years believed that the Yosemite Valley was beautiful and then one day we saw. Some of us believed for years that true love might be what Mrs. Browning in her sonnets sang concerning it, and then one day we saw. Some of us believed for years that there was solid experience behind the Psalmist's words,

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me,"

and then one day we saw. Believing is not seeing. Believing may be a conventional substitute for seeing. Believing may be a mere acceptance of what somebody else reports that he has seen. Always and everywhere our conventional dry-as-dust religion goes back to this capacity to believe so many things that we do not really see, and lamentable is the consequence—multitudes of so-called Christians, believing in the queen but seeing the mouse.

We Christians say that we believe in Jesus Christ. How little that may matter to personal character and social conduct the sad story of Christendom's immorality makes plain; aye, and the listlessness and selfishness of much of our own living. Doubtless we do believe in Jesus Christ. Why should we not? From our youth up we have heard about him. From our earliest days he has been pictured to us as the Divine Life revealed in human character. The noblest spirits we have ever known were under the spell of his influence. Is it so strange that we should believe in him? Why should we not?

So men who themselves never have a gleam of scientific insight believe that Thomas Edison was a great scientist. So folk who themselves never had a glimpse of music's meaning believe that Toscanini is a great musician. How superficial belief can be! But one thing would not be superficial: if we should see life as Jesus saw

it, perceive in it what he beheld there, look at people and money and friendship and trouble and death as he looked at them, so that our Christianity were not belief merely but vision, that would not be superficial. What if our Christianity were not standing over against the high mountain of Christ's idea of life and saying, I believe in it! but were climbing the mountain and from his altitude looking on the world as he looked at it? That would not be superficial. That would start going again an old way of confessing faith which once was the life of the Gospel but too seldom is heard in our modern churches: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

Consider the further fact also, that this gift of seeing aright, concerning which we speak, was the aim of Jesus' ministry. He went about trying to get people to see. A year ago we all were reading that fascinating book by the doctor of San Michele. Recall, then, the simple description with which, near the book's close, he sums up the transformation that has passed over his life by saying that he sees things differently now. The older a man grows, the more, I think, he must perceive that nothing more significant than that can be said of any life: I see things differently now.

Note, then, that this was the aim of Jesus' ministry: he went about trying to get folk to see things differently. In that regard he was an artist, for that is what an artist does. He does not argue. He piles up no accumulating mass of evidence to the smashing climax of a Q.E.D. which will compel our intellectual consent. An artist's method is different. He paints a picture and says, See! He writes a poem and says, See! He composes a symphony and says, Do you see?

So also did Jesus, who was an artist too. He told the story of the prodigal coming back from a far country and of the difference in attitude between the father and the churlish elder brother, and he said, See? He told a story of five wise maidens who went to a wedding feast while there still was time, and of five foolish ones who procrastinated and delayed until they discovered that in this world there is such a thing as being too late, and he said, See?

He summed up in a single sentence a wide area of man's profoundest experience —"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"— and he said, Do you see? He painted a picture of a man with a beam in his own eye trying to get the mote from his brother's eye and he cried, See? He told the story of a good Samaritan who helped a stranger in his need and he asked, Cannot you see? If he had only argued with us, we could have answered him. We have wits for arguing. We know the tricks of the debater. We could have replied to him, argument for argument, theory for theory. But what shall we do with one who tells stories, paints pictures, uses metaphors, sums up age-long experience in flashing sentences with that unescapable refrain, See? when at our best we *do* see, know he is right, know that we have no business not to look at life as he looks at it and that all talk about merely believing in him is nothing if we do not share his seeing.

Sometimes when one speaks thus about our Lord another is tempted to say, Yes, he was artistic but not scientific. To be sure, Jesus was not scientific, not because he was unscientific but because he was something else altogether. He was an artist. Nevertheless, the climax of all science, too, is seeing. The hour when Galileo with the eye of his mind saw the planets moving about the sun, the hour when Newton with the eye of his imagination saw apple and star under one law, the hour when Pasteur saw the secret of immunity—the supreme scientific turning points in history always have been hours of insight, and there and everywhere the future of mankind depends upon the people who can say, Blind I was, but now I see.

I take it that this is what genuine religion is all about. It is not to be con-

ceived that so great a company as this could be gathered here without some person tempted, as so many in our modern world are tempted, to think that he can get on without religion. Granted that you can get on without some kinds of religion. In a generation so momentous as this why one should waste time on the credulities and sectarianisms that commonly pass for religion I too cannot comprehend. When one is finished with all that, however, clean done and impatiently through with the trivialities and obscurantisms of conventional faith, one still must face the fact that religion and irreligion are ways of seeing life and that in the long run we do see it one way or the other.

The gist of irreligion is not a theory about life; the gist of irreligion is a way of looking at life. Listen to this from a character in a contemporary play: "What can I say?" she ejaculates; "I've said it all. Nothing matters but happiness. Get your share. Life's a racket. Loyalty's a joke. We've debunked everything but lust." That is a way of seeing life thoroughly secular and pagan—life's a racket.

When one says that he can get on without religion, everything depends on what he is meaning by religion. What if religion is another way of seeing life? What if it can genuinely come into a man here in the midst of this world, played upon though he is by the pressure of its carnal and sometimes brutal selfishness, immersed in its common ways of thinking and therefore tempted, ah, terribly tempted, to say, "Life's a racket; we have debunked everything," and what if it can lead a man out from all that to see life so differently that, remembering now the days when he thought life was a racket, he will say, "I was blind, but now I see"? That would be a kind of religion that in the moral crisis of our present civilization we can ill go on without.

Is it for nothing that the great souls of the race have been called seers? Is it for nothing that the supreme seers have always been religious? Can we go on without Christianity if it means seeing life as Christ saw it?

He looked on people, for example, and saw in them what never had been seen before. He saw behind the leprosy of the leper, behind the sin of the sinner, behind the poverty of the poor. Wherever personality came within his ken, in child or woman, in ruler or peasant, he turned upon it his creatively seeing eyes and, lo, out of Simon came Peter and out of a son of Zebedee came John and out of a cheating tax-gatherer came an honest man and out of a wayward boy a forgiven son. The glory of the Christ, as of all great souls, is in his eyes and what he creatively sees with them.

So Cimabue, the artist of Florence, on a business journey passed through the countryside and saw a shepherd boy with a small stone drawing on a smooth rock the picture of a sheep. Cimabue watched him with fascinated eyes. He saw what only an artist could see: another artist, namely, hidden in that boy. So Giotto was discovered, Giotto, greater far than Cimabue, discovered as all unfolding personalities must always be discovered, by some one with creatively seeing eyes. My friends, if Christians were really Christian and looked on people so, that would be genuine religion.

Christ looked on friendship, that so easily sinks to low estate and takes the tarnish of a selfish world, and what he saw we never can forget: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

He looked on money, which so easily becomes a god before which men fall down and worship and for the sake of which they sell not their own souls only but their city's honor and their nation's welfare, and what he saw haunts us yet in all our nobler hours: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

He looked upon the sins that men laugh

(*Continued on page* 340)

Prayer

By Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick

O GOD, from Whom come all things in man and nature, we would sensitively open our spirits to Thee this hour. Thou dost fill all things and yet in this pavilion of Thy worship we would more intimately find Thee and be found of Thee. Infinity of grace and goodness, lift us up into a new faith in Thee and a new vision of Thee. The streams that overflow from Thine abundance make life beautiful and yet dark hours come when questions rise concerning Thee and doubts throng in.

The beauty of nature, its symmetry and order, harmony and color—that we see. The virtues of human life on its noblest altitudes, integrity and honor, courage and goodwill—that we see. The achievements of man's mind and character, the truth that science seeks, the beauty that art creates, the goodness that high-minded manhood gains—that we see. And hopes of the coming Kingdom of God on earth, the victories of ancient times, where light has risen out of darkness and love has proved stronger than hate, that we see.

O God, from Whose great reservoir of goodness these streams flow, make us more certain about Thee, until today we too shall say, O God, Thou art *my* God.

In this faith lift us up into a new courage. Thou seest how our hearts need it. Save us from soft optimism. Let not sentimentality beguile us. Save us from saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace, and may we never try to heal deep diseases with easy words. Give us honesty to face hard facts and yet, with it all, give us courage, we beseech Thee.

Thou seest with what varied needs Thy children seek Thy face. Let us not be appalled by the multitude. O Thou Who dost meet men in the solitariness of their own souls, with Thy still, small voice deal with us one at a time. Cross the secret thresholds of each soul. If we have sinned, grant us the grace of sincere renunciation and penitence, and cleanse us with Thy pardon. If we are in grief, comfort us with the great comfort of Thy strong foundations under us that the storm may not beat us down. If we are in anxiety about worldly estate, clarify our vision that we may see a way out. O God, unsnarl some tangled life in this company this hour, we do beseech Thee. If we are proud, humble us, and if we have been humiliated, lift us up; and so girded send us out to be soldiers of the common good.

Keep us from selfish living in a dangerous and difficult time that cannot survive its follies without public-mindedness. Grant, we beseech Thee, that upon some young life here especially Thy hand of high commission may be laid this day. O God, here in a time that cries for leadership, let leaders rise. We may not hope for them among the aged: we have been too habituated to things ancient; we are not wise enough or strong enough. But, O God, if some young man or woman might come whose eyes, being fresh to the world, can see, and whose mind and heart, being sensitive to Thine approach, can feel the need of this time and the way out, then might we be saved!

So grant Thy presence here this hour, we ask in the spirit of Christ. Amen.

USHERS WHO HAVE SERVED AS CHAIRMEN OF THE BOARD

Mr. Eugene McK. Froment, the first chairman, has been succeeded for varying terms of service, in the order named, by Ambrose Clark, Harry P. Fish, Merton A. Nicholas, Maltby G. L. Harris, George R. Sage, Nelson Thompson, and Chester Stevens, Mr. Stevens, the present chairman, has served for nine years.

"Life Is Action"

By Dean Carl W. Ackerman

An Address before the Thirty-fifth Annual Dinner of the Men's Class

I AM indebted to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the men of the Riverside Church for the privilege of representing the Columbia School of Journalism at your thirty-fifth annual dinner. Although your church and our school are neighbors on Morningside Heights I am a stranger to you, and still I know you well. I live and work within the sound of the Riverside carillon, and Dr. Fosdick's sermons have been welcome in my home ever since the radio enlarged his audience and multiplied his friends. I know your work and something of your influence also, because I have watched the development of religious news in the metropolitan press and in the periodicals of this country ever since I was a student at Columbia. These privileges of association are among the finest of all the privileges of citizenship because they develop individual understanding, inspiration and faith. Hence I welcome this opportunity of paying my highest respects to your leader and to your leadership.

Thirty-two years ago, when your annual dinners were laying the foundation for a new church tradition, Mr. Justice Holmes was elevated to the Chief Justiceship of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts. At that time, members of the Suffolk Bar Association of Boston gave a dinner in his honor, and in responding to their toasts he created a sentence which is still an unrealized ideal.

"With all humility," Mr. Justice Holmes said, "I think 'Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might' infinitely more important than the vain attempt to love one's neighbor as one's self. If you want to hit a bird on the wing, you must have your will in focus, you must not be thinking about your neighbor; you must be *living* in your eye on that bird. Every achievement is a bird on the wing; the joy, the duty, and, I venture to add, the end of life. I speak only of this world," he added, "and of the teachings of this world. I do not seek to trench upon the province of spiritual guides. But from the point of view of the world, the end of life is life. *Life is action,* the use of one's powers."

All of us in our association with others have had the privilege of knowing men of action. We know ministers of action, philanthropists of action, explorers of action; executives, teachers and scientists of action. We respect, admire, and frequently envy them for the use they make of their powers and we wish that more citizens shared their idealism and had their capacity for responsibility.

It has been my good fortune to know a number of men who measure up to Mr. Justice Holmes' ideal. Two of them I shall quote tonight. Although they are men of action in widely separated fields, they are interested in your meeting here and in your work in the church. One of them is an inventor and business man, the other is a policeman. One is rich; the other is poor. One is American; the other British. One is a churchman; the other is not, but both men are giants in the seats of the mighty. One is George Eastman. The other is Colonel J. F. C. Carter of Scotland Yard.

Two years ago while I was writing Mr. Eastman's biography, he received a letter from a citizen of West Virginia which he did not wish to have published. This letter came to mind when I received your invitation and I asked Mr. Eastman for a copy

of that letter and of his reply, and permission to read the correspondence tonight.

In 1929 Mr. Eastman gave the City of Rome one million dollars for the establishment of a dental clinic for Italian children. It was one of several similar gifts to European communities. The publication of this item in the press of West Virginia caused a debate in the Men's Bible Class of a certain church, and the secretary and teacher wrote Mr. Eastman as follows:

"The result of this debate was that men like you and Mr. Blank are the greatest stumbling-block to a poor man living a Christian life.

"This church is made up of poor working men. I will cite myself as to what poor means. American—42 years old. Family of 6. Work 7 days per week, no vacation. $1,500 mortgage on home. $400 doctor bill. Wife and part of children won't go to Church on account of poor clothing. 3 children need tonsils removed, no money. Family needs $200 dentist work done, no money. Bills to pay, no money.

"The questions I was requested to ask you are as follows:

"If you were poor and saw a rich man throwing money away, would it make you doubt God's justice?

"Are you a member of any Church? (Let God decide the Christian part of it.)

"If you have money to give away why not give it to the spreading of the gospel of Christ?

"Why not pay it to your workers in wages?

"But if you cannot do either, why give it to a nation like you did? Why not give it to your country where you made same?

"I told the class that you would not answer. Will you?

"Yours for America first,
(Signature)

"P. S.—Loan on this Church of $8,000."

Mr. Eastman replied to this letter, not because of his own feelings but because of his sense of social responsibility.

"Permit me to say," Mr. Eastman answered, "that I can understand your present anxiety and the problems which confront you. I had to leave school before I was fourteen years old because I was the only wage earner in the family. When I was a young man I had to work eleven hours a day in a job which I considered drudgery. By the time I reached your age I had large obligations and responsibilities because I felt a personal responsibility for the welfare of thousands of families in this country and Europe who were dependent upon the success of this company for their livelihood and, in a measure perhaps, for their happiness.

"You state that you have four children. These children face an entirely different future from that which confronted the children of this country sixty or even seventy years ago when I was a boy. In these intervening years we have had the telephone, the electric light, the street car, the motion picture, the automobile, free public libraries, cheap railroad transportation, excellent daily newspapers and the development of public school, college, and university education which makes it possible for every child to obtain an education. In the meantime, too, the progress of medical and dental science and the improvement in public health enable every citizen to benefit by the labor and the generosity of men and women who have thought more of their fellow citizens than of themselves.

"In the building of industry and transportation in this country some men have accumulated great wealth. In most cases, these men have given to education, to the church or to some agency serving the public a far greater proportion of their wealth than they ever used themselves. So that in addition to raising the economic standard of the country, men like John D. Rockefeller, Cleveland H. Dodge, Jacob Schiff, Julius Rosenwald, Andrew Carnegie, and scores of others have improved the social life of our country.

"What these men and what other rich men and women have done and are doing

will most certainly benefit your own children.

"Because you condemn me for a gift to the people of Italy and because you mention the fact that your own family needs '$200 dentist work,' I want to acquaint you with a few facts that you do not have. I regret that you did not seek to acquaint yourself with these facts before you held your debate, because you handicap yourself, your children, and your community by disregarding them.

"About fifteen years ago a man by the name of Forsythe in Boston conceived the idea of establishing a dental infirmary where the children of that city could obtain expert dental treatment free of charge. The idea appealed to me and I established a Dental Dispensary in Rochester for all indigent children under sixteen years of age. Since this dispensary has been opened the children of this city have received more than one million dental treatments free of charge.

"The success of this institution convinced me that there should be similar dispensaries throughout the United States and Europe and I decided to found one in London and one in Rome, because I was convinced that as the idea spread, other men and women would undertake to build, equip, and endow dispensaries in other cities. Since then Mr. Rosenwald has undertaken the work in Chicago and Mr. and Mrs. Murry Guggenheim in New York City.

"Now there should be such an institution in your community in West Virginia, and in every city in this country. They should be built and operated by government money but until that time comes when the government can do the work, men and women of wealth must carry on.

"Therefore, instead of denouncing the building of dental dispensaries, I would recommend that your Bible Class undertake the more constructive policy of striving for a similar agency in your community.

"As to the religious questions in your letter, I should like to call your attention to the Constitution of your country, which guarantees to every American citizen, complete religious freedom, without being accountable to any man or any Bible class for an explanation of his Faith.

" 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. . . . Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.'

"Yours very truly,
"Geo. Eastman."

Mr. Eastman's life has been a life of action. After inventing film photography and the portable camera, after building an industry upon which the sun never sets and after directing it through periods of turmoil and prosperity he became, as President Butler said, "a literally stupendous factor in the education of the modern world." In spirit and in friendship he flew over the South Pole with Admiral Byrd, and today, in Rochester, he still uses his powers for the welfare of his fellow men. But what, may I ask, can his fellow men do for him? That is one of the tragedies of a life of action. The world can never fully compensate those men and women whose object in life is to build and not simply to share in the operation of these United States.

From Colonel Carter's letter, I shall quote only the conclusion because he writes as Woodrow Wilson used to write, with his own typewriter, single-spaced, and at length. I have known Colonel Carter for thirteen years. At present he is Deputy Commissioner of Metropolitan Police in London with headquarters in Scotland House, the nerve center of the British Secret Service and the brain-center of the criminal investigation work of the greatest organization of police in the world.

Scotland Yard is largely fiction, but Scotland House is a fact. Standing on the Thames, in the shadow of Parliament and within sprinting distance of the Prime

Minister's residence in Downing Street, it is one of the sights of Westminster which few foreigners see and which fewer citizens of Great Britain know. The entrance to Scotland House is one of the bleakest of all entrances to public buildings in London. A "Bobby" is always on guard inside the doors; another runs the lift, and if one is fortunate enough to pass these all-seeing guards and reach the office of Colonel Carter he will meet one of the most humble but most respected civil servants of the King.

For nearly two decades Colonel Carter has been studying the problems of lawlessness and the greater problems of social security. Last summer, in a philosophical moment, he remarked that after all his experiences he had come to the conclusion that the only satisfactory approach to the solution of the problems of crime and corruption was through religion.

This remark was so casual and still so convincing that I did not press him for a more elaborate statement until I began the preparation of this paper. Summarizing his detailed reply, in which he outlined the relationships which exist between the Metropolitan police and the religious institutions of England, Colonel Carter wrote:

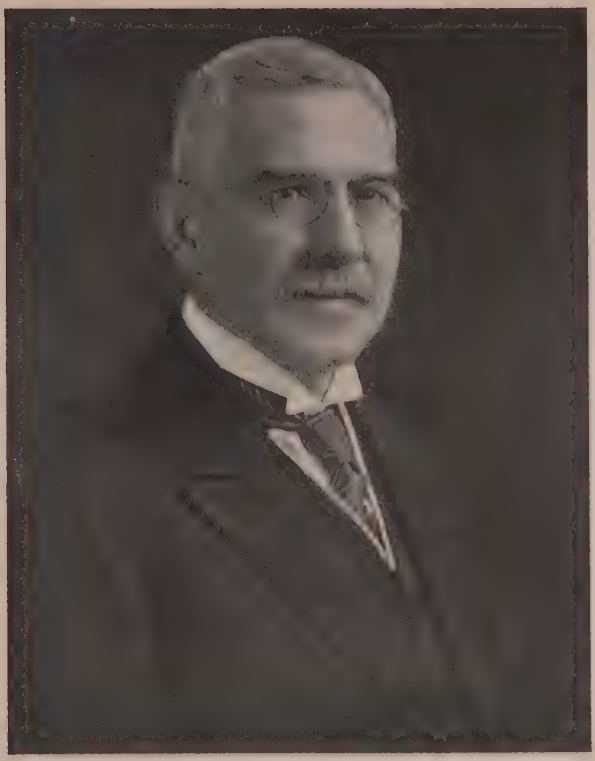
"When I said to you that the whole question of the proper solution of crime lay in religion, I did not expect that you would ask me to elaborate upon it. I cannot do it. Try the Archbishop of Canterbury. He probably knows. All I can sense spiritually (mark those words of a police commissioner) is that the law and the fear of punishment frequently fail to prevent a man from evil doing, but that religious faith, understanding and love may be the greater deterrent. To combine these three and to teach them is the problem, and perhaps it is because it is so often a case of the blind leading the blind that little progress is made."

In this letter Colonel Carter is excessively modest but the record of Scotland House and the administration of the London police speak eloquently of the use the commissioners make of their powers and of the idealism which inspires their activities. There is less corruption in municipal affairs and fewer crimes in London than in any other cosmopolitan city in the world and one of the reasons is because their civic standards of honesty and of justice are religious and not political standards.

Life is action, and a life of action is an ideal. If it is beyond the reach of millions of men, it is because their spheres of action are circumscribed by inheritance, tradition, ignorance, prejudice, or indifference. It is because they are instinctively prisoners of their own prejudices or of the opinions of others. Their faith as well as their credit is frozen and they have become participants in a revolution of inaction and inertia. And if this continues, the result will be the same as the outcome of a revolution of action. Our established institutions—our churches, our schools, our homes, and our government will disintegrate and collapse as surely as they would by mob action or under the pounding of artillery.

I have cited the careers and the philosophies of Mr. Eastman and Colonel Carter because they are men of faith and of finished accomplishments. They have led and are leading lives of action. They personify President Butler's assertion that "The free man socially minded is the hope of the world." They know that action generates action and that the public *will* must be focused upon the problems of the day by *more men* of *action*, if those problems are to be solved which now disturb the happiness of the individual and the peace of the world.

▽ ▽ ▽



WILLIAM M. CRANE

Born June 14, 1853 Died January 11, 1932

The Riverside Church has sustained a well-nigh irreparable loss in the death of William M. Crane. Our sincere sympathy goes out to Mrs. Crane and to the sons, Richard Crane of Mamaroneck and Howard Crane, a senior at Colgate University.

The Board of Trustees adopted the following resolution at the regular meeting of the Board on February eighth:

BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the Board of Trustees of The Riverside Church, do hereby give expression to our sense of loss in the death of William M. Crane, our fellow member and co-worker in the Church since 1897 and in this Board since 1912.

Never asking or expecting anything for himself, Mr. Crane was ever alert to see that his associates got prompt and due recognition for what they might be contributing to the common cause.

Mr. Crane found himself occupied from time to time as member of the Board of Deacons, Superintendent of the Sunday School, Chairman of the Music Committee, Treasurer of the Church, member of the Building Committee charged with responsibility for the erection of the Park Avenue Baptist Church structure, and member during the last five years of the Building Committee of The Riverside Church.

We have had pleasure and profit in his fellowship and counsel here by the quality and weight of which we are now beginning to measure the loss we have sustained. We shall miss him sorely but we shall not forget him.

The Latchstring

Sixty-four years a member. Mrs. Frank L. Froment celebrated her birthday on February thirteenth. The Riverside Church was particularly interested in the event. Mrs. Froment has been a member here for sixty-four years. She is a regular attendant on the church service and is frequently present in the meetings of the women and is personally helpful in many ways. Her interest in the Home for the Aged, where she is President of the Board, has been a chief factor in its marked progress during the past decade. We salute Mrs Froment, member here continuously since February 22, 1868, whose name on the roll of active members stands first and whose place in the esteem of the church continues to grow with the passing years.

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The taxi-man knew. (A report of a visit to the Riverside Church School, made by the Rev. and Mrs. Robert W. Anthony on December 13, 1931.)

One Sunday morning on Broadway at 55th Street, we took a taxi for the Riverside Church School. The driver was a colored man. We said we wanted to go to the Riverside Church. He took us to the west portal, where we saw no one entering, and then around to the North door on 122nd Street, and no one was going in there. We then said, "Take us to the Claremont Avenue entrance, as we wish to go to the Church School." His reply was "I wish you had told me that you wanted to go to the Church School; I would have taken you to the right entrance."

That the taxi-man knew about the School of Riverside Church is not surprising when you think of the busy traffic condition around the Church on Sundays. The School has a waiting list. It has paid trained teachers. Many of its Classes meet for three hours on Sunday mornings. It is a school of life for people of every age in the Church and Congregation.

I visited the Worship Services of the High School and Junior Groups, and was an observer in one of the Classes of the Junior Department. Mrs. Anthony visited the Class for the Parents of Adolescents, observed a Class in the Primary Department, and attended their Worship Service.

Several features stand out in our memories as we recall our visit. The atmosphere was friendly and vital. Unusual opportunities are given for initiative by the members of the School. In the Class in the Junior Department they had their own officers, and four committees, Recreation, Editorial, Service and House. Interesting rules were made by the children themselves, such as "Don't interrupt." "Be quiet in the halls and on the stairs." "Come early, there is always something to do." The Bulletin Boards and black-boards carried pictures, poems, and suggestions made by the members of the Class.

The School is vitally connected with other groups in the city, and beyond it. In every Class and Department we visited, opportunities were suggested for helpful service to others outside the School itself. Departments and Classes had visited, or were arranging to visit, children in centers like "The Church of All Nations," "The Labor Temple," Colored and Chinese Sunday Schools.

There are many through-the-week activities. In the Primary Department each teacher holds a weekly conference of one hour with the Superintendent. There were parties, usually given for another Class or some outside group, or there were meetings to work out some service project. The children were given a very large part in

the planning of these also. A very unusual attempt is made to secure the cooperation of the parents, by Classes held for them, and the visits of the teachers in their homes. The Service of Worship really represents the climax of the work of the various Departments and there is very general participation by the members of the School; in the High School Department they carried it entirely. The approach is made through the children's interests, rather than from the Bible. This inevitably led, however, to a very practical use of Biblical material and principles.

The School is building the real spirit of Brotherhood with all races and economic groups. In the younger Classes about eighteen is the average number, with a teacher and an assistant, and sometimes one or more volunteer helpers. The genuine enthusiasm of the members of the School for its life and work, and the very unusual attention given to individual children and their problems, were conspicuous.

Real pioneer work in the field of Christian Education is being carried on by the Riverside Church.

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Licensed to Preach. On December 2nd, 1931, at the regular business meeting of the church, favorable action was taken upon the recommendation of the Board of Deacons that the church grant a "license to preach" to Mr. Richmond A. Fewlass. We have had many inquiries from people in the church as to just what the meaning of this particular action on the part of the church might be. We are glad to have the opportunity, in the first place, to introduce Mr. Fewlass as a prospective candidate for the Christian ministry, and also to acquaint the members of the church and others interested with at least one of the steps by which a young man passes from the status of a college or seminary student who has the ministry in mind, to the status of one who has definitely announced that he hopes to qualify himself to enter the Christian ministry and asks of his own church an expression of approval.

In such a case, the local church considers the application first in its Board of Deacons, where he is introduced by a minister of the church and recommended for the favorable consideration of the Board. The recommendation is passed on to the church itself in a regular meeting in which the approval of the church is asked. The young man then has behind him, as he goes out to meet such engagements as may come to him to address religious services, the sanction of his own church, where he presumably is best known, and their recommendation as to his character and responsibility.

It is this warrant which we have given to our young friend, Mr. Fewlass, in licensing him to preach. We trust that in due course, with his Seminary days behind him, and having made good use of such opportunities for practical work in the church and the pulpit as may come to him, he will present himself here or in some church that anticipates calling him to its pastorate and be ordained regularly into the Christian ministry.

A "license to preach," therefore, is a preliminary step taken by a prospective candidate for the ministry as he looks toward his ultimate ordination into the active work of the Christian church.

Photograph by William Bernard Brown

AT THE SPEAKERS' TABLE—MEN'S DINNER

The Foreign Student Committee

OF the 10,000 and more foreign students now studying in the United States ten per cent of them live in the neighborhood of Riverside Church. What significance is there in that fact which should arouse the interest and a sense of responsibility of the membership of this Church?

In the first place, they are a select body of young people—alert, teachable, eager for friendship, highly intelligent and ambitious. They are the very flower of representation of their respective countries. They are all potential leaders in the fields of education, commerce, law, medicine, the arts, social service and religion when they return to their own countries. They have the attitude and understanding that responds to the ideals and objectives of Riverside Church. Furthermore, they are here for a comparatively short time, some for the full undergraduate period of four years, and many but for a year or two of graduate or special study. Before long they will be scattered to the ends of the earth to be among the influential makers of public opinion in their home lands. Now they are our near neighbors. Any cooperation, service or friendliness we extend must be today. Tomorrow they are gone.

It is important to remember that they are students outside as well as inside their class rooms. In this great city they are exposed to the good, bad and indifferent of American customs and institutions and daily are receiving impressions that will have indelible effect upon their characters and in fixing opinions of American culture and ideals.

Many of these foreign students are the products of mission colleges established by American missionary boards. The high ideals engendered in the hearts and minds of these students by contacts with our missionaries on the field receive a severe jolt in the process of entry through the U. S. Immigration and Customs House doorway. The subsequent experiences in hurrying, rude and thoughtless New York do not help to establish a conviction that we are a Christian nation.

What an opportunity to Riverside Church members their numbers and proximity present. They do not want to be pitied or flattered or treated as curiosities. These young people from overseas respond to friendly overtures of friendly American people.

The Foreign Student Committee of Riverside Church has a program of activities which brings to the "Coffee Hours" and various special events which the Committee conducts or sponsors, many foreign students in the course of the year. These friendly contacts have had an important part in deciding a number of foreign students to unite with the Church, usually on an affiliated basis. The integration of these new members into the general life and activities of Riverside Church in the comparatively short time they are with us calls for cooperation of all active members. These modest-mannered foreign students are very responsive but are not disposed to go more than halfway in an approach.

The Committee is deeply concerned that not only those who join the Church but also other foreign students be given the opportunity to enjoy the hospitality of the American Christian home. It means enjoyment and interest for the student but equally if not more so for the home in which any of these splendid young personalities are entertained. One can live in New York and be very provincial-minded, but a chat over a cup of tea or the exchange of thought around the dinner table or in the family circle with a foreign student expands one's horizons. Incidentally, seeds of friendship and international understanding are sown. It is particularly appropriate that in these days of world-wide economic and political disturbance we exercise our privilege of cultivating international good-will and demonstrating practical Christianity by showing hospitality to these strangers in our midst.

The Guild's Easter Message

Each Easter sees a renewal of Hope among Christians, a re-affirmation of belief in the eternal message of Christ and in the symbol of His resurrected life.

That Easter comes in the spring of the year is particularly happy, for Spring of itself brings a new joy, a gladness for life distinctly different, and possibly more deeply spiritual, than that inspired by other seasons.

The Riverside Guild is giving over the month of March to an interpretation of Easter in a series of four worship services, emphasizing this renewal of Hope and recurrence of resurrected Life.

The services planned are:

March 6th—"The Terrible Meek," by Charles Rann Kennedy, a protest against that society which brought about the crucifixion, with an appreciation for the need today to realize that the power of the meek "shall inherit the earth."

March 13th—"The Wife of Pontius Pilate," an original dramatization based on the story by Agnes S. Turnbull. Adapted by Miss Margaret Tralle for the Epicures.

March 20th—A service of Easter Song by the Guild Chorus, with pantomime.

March 27th—A service of joy and praise dramatized from John Masefield's poem, "Easter," in collaboration with Miss Phoebe Guthrie of St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie.

These services are presented by the Riverside Guild for the public in the Assembly Hall at 7.30 o'clock.

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The Desire of the Moth

Always it has been known of moths that their desire was for—light: even as G. K. Chesterton says of the Franciscan friars (in his life of St. Francis of Assisi) that "they were perpetually coming and going in all the highways and byways, seeking to insure that any man who met one of them by chance might have a spiritual adventure."

For since ever the time of man began there have been persons meeting other persons on streets, byways, jungle paths, with a joy in their eyes which was contagious, and an interpretation in their speech which was arresting. As far back as 604 B.C. there was the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu explaining to his disciples: "Clay is fashioned into vessels; it is on their empty hollowness that their use depends. Doors and windows are cut out to make a dwelling, and on the empty space within, its use depends. Thus while the existence of things may be good, it is the non-existent in them which makes them serviceable."

Because, out of this conscious emptiness in life, all desire for God and for service has been evolved, the Woman's Society is planning to devote the next program—on Monday morning, March 7th (at 10:30 o'clock) to the discovery of how this search has been phrased with peculiar beauty by men and women of all races. For it is during Lent that we are learning to rearrange our conceptions of God and man, while we too grope toward the light. What has proven proverbial and unforgettable to others can create strange loveliness for our own needs.

Speaking of needs . . . do you ever toss your used magazines into the scrap basket? You would never dream of such sheer waste if you could know what surprising adventures they might have if brought to the church, marked for Mrs. Alexander Candlish, Chairman of the Magazine and Book Committee of the Woman's Society. For this committee sends them broadcast, quite literally over the entire globe for use

by sailors and soldiers and others who are lonely, bored, idle, in need of just the instant distraction which magazines furnish.

A glance at the mail received by the committee gives only an inkling of the far-flung extent of its work. One such letter which a chaplain sent direct to Dr. Fosdick speaks warmly of "the good women of your church," mentions what a feast it is in the isolated life on the sea to have the sudden feast of all the back issues of a certain magazine for a year.

Any effort on your part in collecting used magazines in your home and bringing them to the church is small indeed in comparison with the magic you can work in the monotonous lives of those who are constantly on the brink of loneliness, homesickness, and the breakdown of morale which ennui entails.

(M.T.A.—for the Woman's Society.)

The Way Out from a Dry-as-Dust Religion

(*Continued from page* 328)

at, make game over, excuse themselves for with glib and easy phrases, upon the lusts that always involve another person, the selfishness that always hurts another person, the infidelities that always betray another person, and what he saw stripped its drapery from sin and left the naked fact: sin is any conduct that makes it hard for persons to live life well.

He looked on beauty and goodness also, on Galilean flowers and little children, on fathers who could forgive their sons and Samaritans who would assist their neighbors, and in all life's goodness and beauty he saw the revelation of God at the heart of things. So sometimes on these Autumn days I walk through the city's parks and see the beauty of the struggling trees trying to survive their difficult environment and even in the beauty of the city trees see a revelation of something greater than they are that exists around the world—Maine forests, the woods that gloriously clothe the Rockies, the Cryptomerias of Japan, and the lovely footpaths of the Schwarzwald. Even a struggling city tree has intimations of something greater than itself. So Jesus looked on struggling human goodness and said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

That is Christianity. It is a way of seeing life. Let all conventional believers take notice: being a Christian is not mainly believing in Christ; it is sharing his way of seeing.

If that is what Christianity is, then true conversion is typified in this blind man in the parable. He had his eyes opened. That is what conversion is. He had his eyes opened and he went out into life, unsure, it is true, about many things, but saying to his tormentors, You may think this or that and have your opinions thus or so; I am a plain man dealing with plain matters, but one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

That is one thing a church should care about—helping people see. We are going out now into a world where in politics and business and family relationship and public life and private character men are doing wrong, but always back of that is the deeper fact: they are seeing wrong. Like an engineer who runs past his signals and involves hundreds in a catastrophic wreck, men are doing wrong. But test that engineer's eyes and another secret may come out: he was seeing wrong. All social progress outside waits for correction of vision inside.

That might happen to some of us here, with momentous consequence to ourselves, our families, our world. Listen, my friends: "Jesus answered Bartimæus and said, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And the blind man said unto him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."

PRAYER

Eternal Spirit, we are blind about life. Open thou our eyes that we may receive our sight. Amen.

Dr. Fosdick preached the foregoing sermon on November 1, 1931.

HANDBOOK OF THE INSTITUTION AND ITS BUILDING

This new book deals with the institution and its program, the building, its architecture and symbolism, the details of the stained glass windows and of the carved stone being identified. It is a book of 127 pages, including 59 reproductions of photographs that have been recently made. In make-up and typography the book is one which you will wish to have in your possession and keep as a souvenir of the church. It sells for $1.00 a copy, plus fifteen cents if you ask to have it mailed. It is for sale at the Literature Table on Sunday mornings and in the vestibule throughout the week.

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Dr. Fosdick Speaks Again on the Budget

This year the budget sermon will be preached on April 17th. As we consider the budget for the coming fiscal year, May 1, 1932, to April 30, 1933, we are naturally thinking of two groups of people in the church who have failed in other years to understand what Dr. Fosdick was talking about in his budget sermons. Some among us, (in this particular church they are comparatively few) have so suffered financially that they cannot make a contribution. Of course, all such are readily excused and of them we are not thinking now. We are thinking of the member or attendant whose financial situation has not greatly changed but who does not give. We frankly challenge anyone so situated to consider the necessary expense under which we are working here and to assume some responsible relation to it, no matter how small or large the contribution may be. Obviously the situation requires some response from everyone.

The second group is not so easy to define and much more difficult to understand. It consists of high-minded and highly intelligent people of large means whose financial obligations to clubs, outside charities, social groups and other personal interests may run into thousands of dollars annually but who feel that they can discharge their obligations to the church which they regularly attend by most nominal contributions. Sometimes it's a hundred dollars a year or perhaps a hundred and fifty or two hundred. We submit that anyone whose life is scaled to the demands of the upper levels of social and economic life, with the financial standards necessarily involved, who scales his church responsibility down to the level regularly maintained by employed people and by salaried professional people, is missing the message of this pulpit from week to week and most certainly missing the point of the annual Budget Sunday sermon.